HTS

Health Tech
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May 29th, 2009

Acting Chairman Michael Copps
Commissioners Jonathan Adelstein
Commissioner Robert McDowell
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: WC Docket No. 09-51

Dear FCC Acting Chairman and Commissioners:

Since 1993, the Capitol Hill "Steering Committee on Telehealth and Healthcare Informatics" has convened more than 125 widely attended educational sessions and healthcare information technology demonstrations for members of Congress, congressional staff, key federal agency officials, industry professionals and the general public. As convener of the series, I have seen firsthand some of the amazing technological innovations that have transformed the health care industry. Many 21st century health care solutions rely heavily on broadband technology. For a new health care system to properly function, broadband must be available every step of the way – from patients' homes to first responder vehicles to hospitals.

As the FCC develops a national broadband strategy, we ask you to consider the innovations that broadband enables. Broadband must be affordable and accessible so more Americans can harness this technology to improve their health and well-being.

The American Telemedicine Association reports that today there are more than 200 telehealth networks connecting some 2,000 institutions across the country. Telemedicine reduces health care costs, improves health care accessibility for Americans in rural locations, and is a convenient solution for both patients and physicians. According to the Benton Foundation, health IT can save $670 per household per year. For the median family in America, that would be 25% of their annual out-of-pocket costs for health care.

But cutting-edge health care applications need to have the benefits and reliability of intelligent and managed networks. Smart, reliable networks ensure the functionality of telehealth applications. Providers must have the authority to manage their networks to control spam, worms, and viruses from slowing the delivery of critical messaging and data. Unmanaged networks would prove to be unreliable and inefficient, and are thus an unacceptable avenue for sending time-sensitive medical data. As the Internet becomes flooded with more data and applications, it is essential to exercise network management to ensure the delivery of important data such as medical imaging or emergency response transmissions.

As the FCC determines our country's broadband strategy, we urge you to keep in mind the importance of smart networks to maintaining the utility of telemedicine applications. All Americans deserve access to the innovative and life-saving applications that broadband enables. President Obama has touted the benefits of delivering health care in the digital world; we hope that you follow his lead and promote policies that enable telemedicine and the opportunities that it creates.

Sincerely,

Neal Neuberger
President